

Opening Statement for Chairman Silvestre Reyes
Annual Threat Assessment Hearing
House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence
January 18, 2007
Embargoed until delivery

Good morning. The Committee will come to order.

Sixty two (62) years ago this month, in the midst of World War II, President Roosevelt addressed the nation on radio, saying: "This war must be waged — it is being waged — with the greatest and most persistent intensity. Everything we are and have — is at stake. Everything we are and have — will be given."

Today, America again finds itself in the midst of war. The threats facing America are different than the threats we faced in World War II. This threat is more diffuse and more long-term, and there is the danger that it will not be recognized for the defining challenge it may pose to our nation. But make no mistake: everything we have is again at stake. And the American people deserve to know whether "everything we have *will be given.*"

That is the essential question that the House Permanent Select on Intelligence will seek to answer in the 110th Congress. Given the threats to American national security interests — from failed states imploding in violence, to terrorist networks plotting attacks, to rogue dictators seeking nuclear weapons, to rising powers looking to challenge American influence — *is everything we have as a nation being devoted to the fight? What are the threats? And do we have the capabilities we need to protect America?*

To help answer those questions, we have invited the Director of National Intelligence, John D. Negroponte, as well as the leaders of our major intelligence organizations — General Michael Hayden of the CIA; General Michael Maples of the DIA; Charlie Allen of the Department of Homeland Security; and Philip Mudd of the National Security Branch at the FBI.

These leaders represent the thousands of women and men in the Intelligence Community — many of whom are serving at this hour on the front lines. I want to salute those brave professionals. And I welcome their leadership to today's hearing.

I want to thank Director Negroponte for his service as our nation's first DNI. Though we have not always agreed on the direction of this new enterprise, we certainly commend you for your service and wish you well in your new endeavor. And I look forward to meeting with and working with the person nominated to replace you, Admiral McConnell.

I also want to welcome all of the Members of the Committee, those who are returning to serve on this Committee, as well as our new colleagues: Mike Thompson of California; Jan Schakowsky of Illinois; James Langevin of Rhode Island; and Patrick Murphy of Pennsylvania.

I want to particularly welcome our former Chairman and distinguished Ranking Member Pete Hoekstra.

Colleagues, I want to make the following pledges to you as we begin our first public hearing:

- I will endeavor to forge a bipartisan approach and will seek common ground where we can. Where there are differences, I pledge to air them civilly and professionally.
- I will work to promote excellence in the Intelligence Community ... to sharpen the tip of the spear in the war on terror ... to produce the most effective intelligence capability for both policymakers and warfighters.
- I will focus on oversight and reclaim the power of this Committee because the American people expect us to do the job required of us by the Constitution.
- I will conduct as much business as possible in public because, after all, the public is paying for all of this. But where national security must be safeguarded, we will do our work behind closed doors and maintain the secrets of our nation without compromise.
- And to my colleagues and to the public we serve, I want to say: we will never question your patriotism for expressing disagreement with one of us or any other official of the government.

In the near future, the Committee will issue a formal work plan, but for the moment, let me share some of my personal priorities.

Our first goal was to implement the 9/11 Commission recommendations. We did so by passing H.R. 1 to close the gaps in our homeland security and by creating a new Intelligence Oversight Panel within the Appropriations Committee. This panel will fuse together the Intelligence Authorization and Appropriations processes. This is good news for HPSCI – it is the first time that we'll have a formal seat at the Appropriations table, allowing us to contribute the knowledge we gain from our extensive oversight to decisions on the appropriation of funds. I will work to make certain that this new panel enhances the effectiveness of Congressional oversight.

Second, I believe that Congress must send an Intelligence Authorization Act to the President. We have done so every year since this Committee was formed in 1978 ... until the last Congress. Through no fault of this Committee, Congress has not enacted authorizing legislation for the past two years. I want to get us back on track.

Third, the Committee must focus on two primary theaters of conflict right now – Iraq and Afghanistan – and understand why we are having such problems achieving our

objectives in those two theaters. In the coming weeks, I intend to hold a series of hearings on Iraq – so that we can fairly assess the situation there and evaluate the President's proposed course of action. I am eager for our witnesses today to share their views about whether we are making progress in Iraq and whether the proposed plan on the table will likely stop the sectarian violence that is raging around the 140,000 American forces in Iraq.

The Committee will also continue the work we began in the last Congress to understand the threats posed by Iran and North Korea – two nations that are bent on obtaining a nuclear arsenal in defiance of the world community. What do we know about these regimes? How are their decisions made? And perhaps more importantly, what don't we know?

We all know that the Al Qaeda network has evolved over the past five years. Is Al Qaeda still the greatest threat to the U.S. homeland? What about Hezbollah, Hamas, or other radical Islamist groups? What about so-called "homegrown" terrorists? As the terrorist threat evolves, I want to know more about these threats and what we can do to stop them.

I plan to direct our Committee to focus on the areas of the world that have received far less attention in the recent past: Latin America and Africa. The threats from these regions often appear less urgent. But both of them demonstrate trends that, if left unaddressed, could seriously threaten core U.S. national security interests.

The Committee will explore how we can build a better, stronger core of intelligence professionals, who speak the languages and have the cultural sensitivity to penetrate and understand the hardest targets. Diversity is not just something we pursue to make ourselves feel better; in an intelligence war, it is a matter of national survival.

We are going to remain focused on improving analysis by insisting on caveats, dissents, alternative views, and the use of Open Source material – so that we never again allow policy to be based on—or justified with—flawed and unchallenged analysis.

We are going to carefully and systematically review some of the more controversial and sensitive intelligence programs, such as the NSA surveillance program and the CIA's detainee program. As I noted yesterday, the Administration's decision to end the practice of warrantless surveillance and seek court orders from the FISA Court is welcome, if long overdue. I am going to withhold judgment on this until we can review the court orders and the legal memoranda that were provided to the Court. We'll look at these issues in a serious, constructive, bipartisan fashion.

The Committee will continue to monitor the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, as well as the standup of the National Security Branch at the FBI and the emerging intelligence tools utilized by DOD and the Department of Homeland Security – all developments of our post 9/11 world.

And, of course, we are going to stay true to the reason the Committee was created nearly three decades ago – to ensure that the intelligence activities of the United States are an effective, appropriate and lawful use of taxpayer resources. Other nations have crown jewels, or diamond mines, or vast oil fields. Our most precious commodities are the liberties and Constitutional values that bind Americans together. It is the job of this Committee “to provide for the Common Defence” – as Article I of the Constitution makes clear – and to defend the Constitution itself when our ideals are threatened.

I look forward to a productive hearing and a productive Congress, and now I’d like to recognize my friend, our Ranking Member Mr. Hoekstra, for any opening statement he might have.